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TAGORE AND AMERICA

by J. L. Dees

For Khooshie, Lala, and Ranee—

children of the new India

—with affection .

THE AUTHOR

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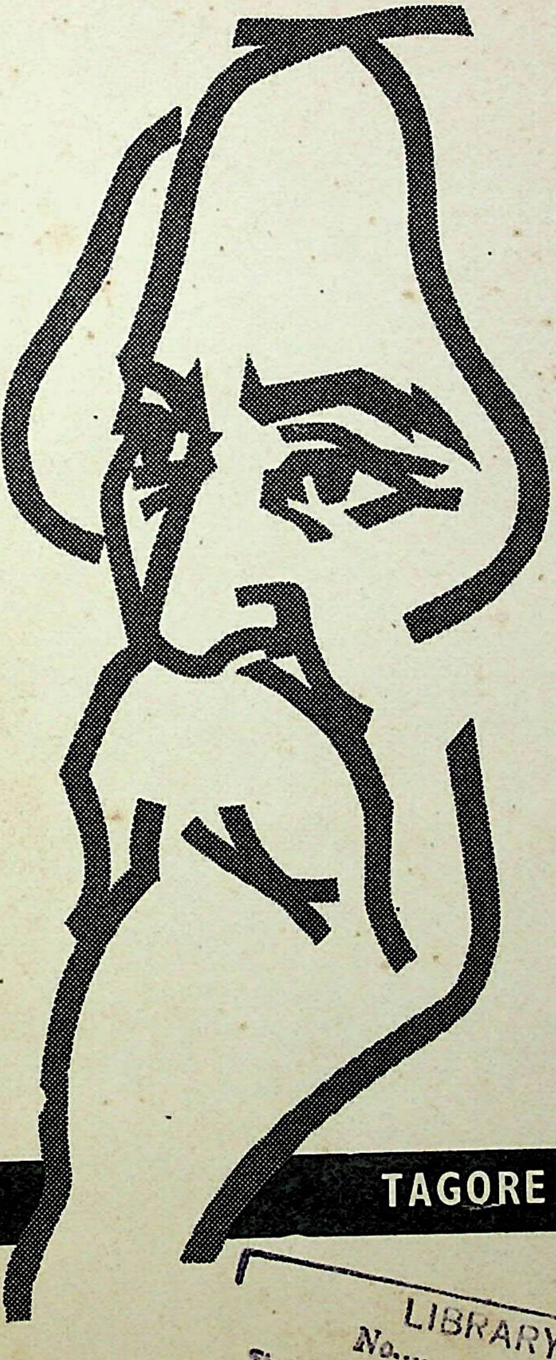

TAGORE AND AMERICA

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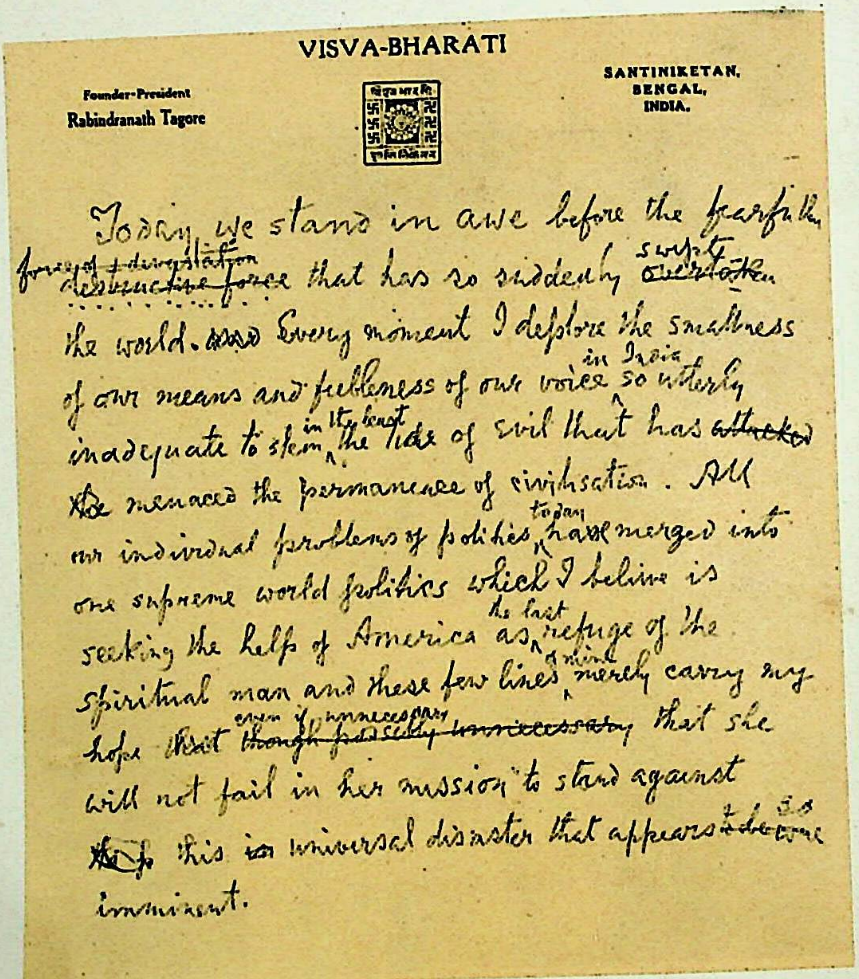

VISVA-BHARATI

Founder-President
Rabindranath Tagore

SANTINIKETAN,
BENGAL,
INDIA.

Today we stand in awe before the fearfully ~~forces of + devastation~~ ~~destructive force~~ that has so suddenly swept ~~overtaken~~ the world. ~~was~~ Every moment I deplore the smallness of our means and feebleness of our voice in India so utterly inadequate to stem in the least the tide of evil that has ~~attacked~~ ~~the~~ menaced the permanence of civilisation. All our individual problems of politics today have merged into one supreme world politics which I believe is seeking the help of America as the last refuge of the spiritual man and these few lines of mine merely carry my hope ~~that~~ even if unnecessary ~~though possibly unnecessary~~ that she will not fail in her mission to stand against ~~the~~ this ~~in~~ universal disaster that appears so ~~to become~~ imminent.

Tagore's handwritten draft of his telegram to President Franklin D. Roosevelt on the fall of Paris during World War II :

"To-day, we stand in awe before the fearfully destructive force that has so suddenly swept the world. Every moment I deplore the smallness of our means and the feebleness of our voice in India so utterly inadequate to stem in the least, the tide of evil that has menaced the permanence of civilization.

All our individual problems of politics to-day have merged into one supreme world politics which, I believe, is seeking the help of the United States of America as the last refuge of the spiritual man, and these few lines of mine merely convey my hope, even if unnecessary, that she will not fail in her mission to stand against this universal disaster that appears so imminent."

(Courtesy: Mr. Anil K. Chanda, Deputy Minister of Works, Housing and Supply, Government of India, New Delhi.)

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PROLOGUE

America has the figure of youth, and all that is best in Western civilization will eventually find lodgment here.

—Rabindranath Tagore, New York City, November 18, 1916.

...When we say that America is materialistic, we speak of a fact which is too apparent to be completely true... there is a strong current of spiritual idealism flowing beneath the surface soil of the American mind.

—Rabindranath Tagore, "East to West," *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 1927.

Spiritual ends of life are pursued with a keenness in America not found anywhere else in the modern world, and the production of wealth instead of hampering her inner vision has emancipated her imagination of a creative democracy which will offer true freedom to the human spirit. One cannot but feel that this spiritual adventure of the American civilization will find ever-renewing avenues of self-expression, that she will exploit her material resources for the well-being of humanity, conquering disease and spreading scientific habits of living, and offer by her directive control of scientific knowledge benefits which will spread far beyond her own geographical limits.

—Rabindranath Tagore, Santiniketan, April 10, 1931.

All our individual political problems today are merged into one supreme world of politics which I believe is seeking help in the United States as the last refuge of spiritual man.

—Rabindranath Tagore to the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt,
in a cablegram from Kalimpong, India, June 1940.

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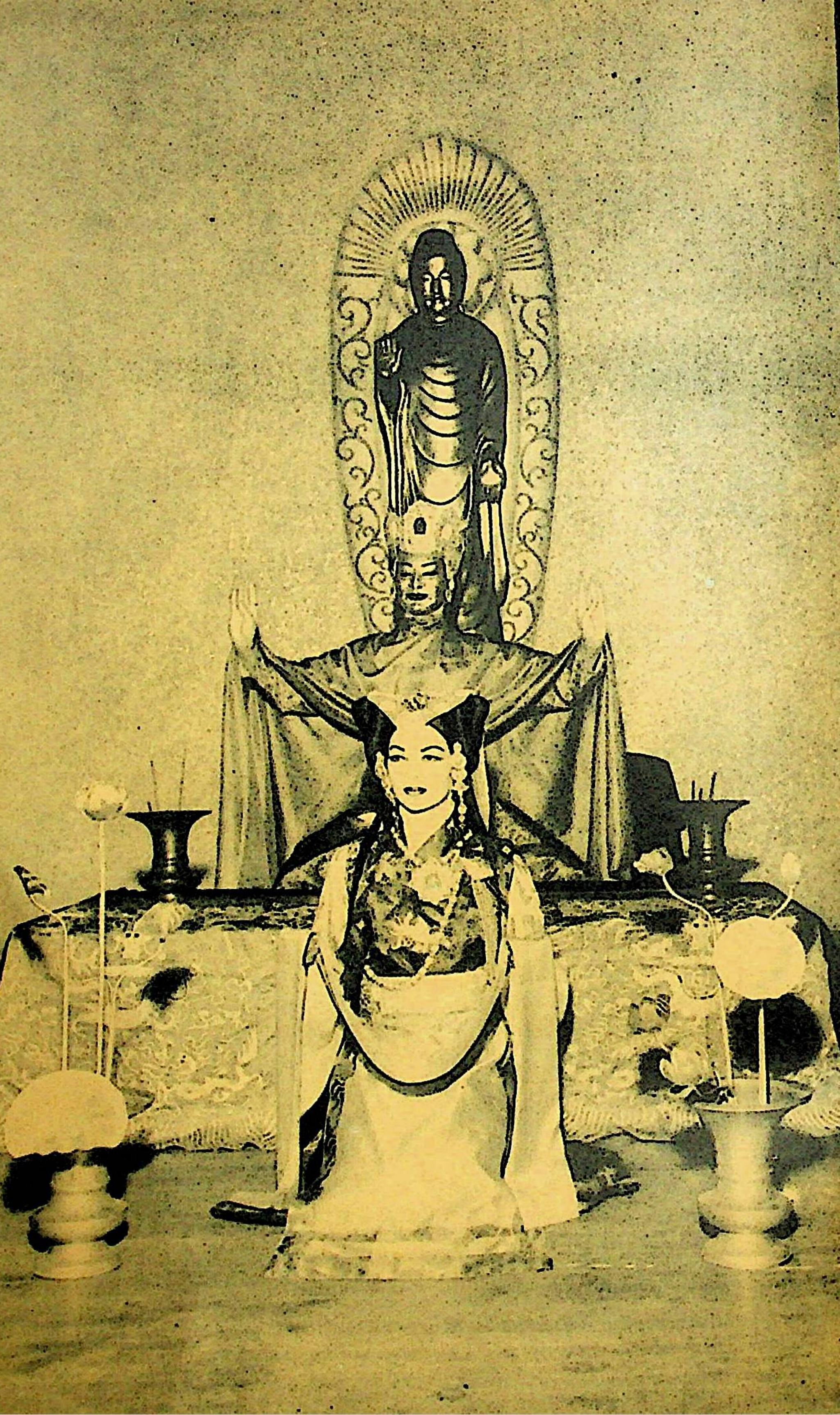
INTRODUCTION

In 1961 India and the world are celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the birth of India's great poet-patriot Rabindranath Tagore. Thus, twenty years after his death (he died in August 1941 at the age of eighty), tribute is paid again to one who was honoured in his lifetime as few other men of letters have been honoured.

Tagore, in the eyes of many, is ranked with Gandhi as a "father of modern India." At the same time he has been called India's "greatest poet since Kalidasa." It is essentially this double image which is honoured in the celebrations. Tagore was not a political creature, as such. Except for a short period between 1905 and 1908 when he worked with the Swadeshi (homeland, or "economic independence") movement and in 1911 when he wrote the song that has since come to be accepted as India's national anthem, his politics were confined largely to the editorial page, the essay, and the letter of protest. Similarly, he was not alone a poet. The brilliant, impatient mind which rebelled at formal schooling after the age of twelve found, to be sure, the greatest outlet for its protest and for its love of Man, Nature and God in poetry. Yet its owner was also novelist, dramatist, essayist, historian, philosopher, singer, actor, painter, and educator. His passionate and prolific pen[1] introduced a renaissance in Bengali literature, provided the model for a whole school of Indian writers, and served as a catalyst of cultural and national consciousness in the critical period of India's reemergence. His Santiniketan school, later extended to include his Visva-Bharati (World Culture) University, at Bolpur in West Bengal, has become a symbol of tolerance and universalism in education and, in its development over more than half a century, has had a positive influence on Indian thinking.

During his lifetime Tagore was honoured by universities, parliaments, presidents, and kings. Gandhi, with whom he had a deep bond of friendship and mutual esteem, took pleasure in calling this man, who was only eight years older than himself, "Gurudev," or Great Teacher. Others paid homage to him as "India's poet laureate," "the Sun of India," and "the Sentinel of the East"—to give but a sampling—and compared him with Dante, Goethe, Wordsworth, and Walt Whitman. In the words of one of his biographers he "bestrode modern Indian Culture like the Colossus."[2] He was the intimate of the great and the near great of every continent of the



globe. But to millions of Indian villagers and townspeople, the masses of the undernourished and underprivileged of rural India and of the crowded urban areas for whom he felt such compassion and for whom so many of his songs were written, Tagore was and still is, simply, The Poet, the highest encomium possible in a country where poets are many and poetry is reverenced as the highest form of expression.

Today Tagore's works are available in most of the languages and in virtually every country in the world. In Washington, D.C., the Library of Congress of the United States has considerably more than two hundred entries of works by and about Tagore on its shelves in various languages, including Hebrew, Latvian and Marathi. Tagore Societies in the United States and other countries continue to cultivate interest in his writings and his ideas and to strengthen their bonds of understanding with India. In the village streets of rural India and in the theatres and schoolrooms of the towns, Tagore's plays are still performed and many of his songs and poems are as well known now as in his lifetime.

But in retrospect it is clear that it is as much Tagore the man—Tagore the *personality*—as it is Tagore the writer and artist who is remembered and who has left his mark on the mind. For the poet, striking in manner and appearance, was also a man of principles and of considerable physical and moral courage, and these qualities were conspicuous on more than a few occasions. Many of the questions and issues on which he wrote or spoke out —on social and sanitary conditions among his countrymen, on woman's rights, on the caste system, child marriage, and the Hindu orthodoxy, on the administration of the British *raj*, and on political strategy—were unpopular with various elements in India. Similarly, the opinions he gave forth freely and vigorously on what he viewed as the evils of nationalism, the need to sacrifice for peace, and the shortcomings of Western society met at times with sharp criticism and, in some quarters, undisguised hostility.

The climate in which Tagore confronted his own India and the world changed many times, and the barometer of his popularity varied accordingly, but his convictions and the courage with which he maintained them did not fail. Pleading for ideals in the bleak cold of economic and political reality in the first four decades of the twentieth century, the poet of Bengal was regarded by many in the East and in the West as being "unrealistic" and out of touch with the times. To many others, including a great number of Americans, he was recognized as a man of world vision, and his abhorrence of dictatorship, esteem for human dignity, and appeals for cultural union and closer understanding between East and West fell on responsive ears.

Highlight of the Tagore Centennial celebrations in Los Angeles was a performance of the Tagore dance-drama CHITRA by Ashok and Sujata at the Assistance League of Southern California Playhouse.

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA

A LITTLE KNOWN fact about Rabindranath Tagore, and one in which Americans may take pride, is that the first publication of his poems in the Western world took place in the United States. In December 1912, the magazine *Poetry*, published in Chicago, included six poems translated into English from the *Gitanjali*, or Song Offerings, the work which a year later was to win for India's poet the first Nobel Prize for Literature ever granted to a writer of the East. The development was significant in that it contributed to the West's "discovery" of Tagore which was to sweep him to world fame. At the same time, it marked the beginning of an American awareness of this man of the East and of a bond between Tagore and the people of the United States which, despite momentary misunderstandings and adverse currents of a later period, was to endure for the remainder of his life.

The year 1912 was a crucial one in the life of the Bengali poet. It was in the summer of that year that the man who was already a legend in his own country visited England and, at the age of fifty-one with half a dozen careers behind him, found himself an overnight sensation when his poems, translated into English, were heard by a group of poets headed by William Butler Yeats. That autumn, at the urging of his son, Rathindranath, Tagore sailed for the United States and in October took up lodging in a house in Urbana, Illinois. Rathindranath Tagore in his book *On the Edges of Time* writes amusingly of his father's first visit to America. Rathindranath, then twenty-four, had studied at the University of Illinois from 1906 to 1909, then had gone back home to Bengal, married, and helped with his father's model farm development at Bolpur. Now, accompanied by his young bride, Pratima, and his father, he hoped to complete his graduate degree in agriculture during the winter months at Urbana. Thus, "I was happy to see father start writing immediately. I knew that as long as he remained busy at his desk he would not think of moving and I might get a long spell at the University to finish my thesis."

But the young man's ambitious plans had to give way under the pressure of demands on his eminent father. Word of Tagore's newly discovered genius had crossed the Atlantic and there were invitations for him to speak at Chicago, Harvard, and other universities. He lectured also at the

Federation of Religious Liberals (Rochester, New York) on "Race Conflict," dealing with aspects of this subject in India and America. The young degree-candidate was kept busy typing up his father's lectures and had no opportunity to complete his thesis.

> Father was writing *Sadhana*. As each chapter was written I had to get it typed. But since there were constant additions and alterations typing became an expensive item in our budget. So I bought a portable machine and did the typing myself. I had to type and retype each chapter so many times that by the time I finished I knew almost the whole book by heart.

Such was the background of the Harvard lecture series, "Sadhana: the Realization of Life," which later appeared as a book under that title. The Harvard Lectures were given an advance hearing in the local Unitarian Church in Urbana at the request of its pastor, "a Harvard Graduate." Invitations from other universities poured in, and early in 1913 the Tagores struck camp at Urbana. The Harvard Lectures followed and also, it would appear, a series of lectures in New York, although it is of interest to note that there is no listing of Tagore in *The New York Times Index* for the first half of 1913. In April 1913, the Tagores—father, son, and daughter-in-law—sailed for Europe and from there, in September, for India.

It was a quiet visit, that first visit to America. It had none of the burden and bombast and pressure of publicity that Tagore's later visits had. The poet loved the tranquillity of the college town of Urbana and delighted in the beauties of its snowscapes. ("Oh! the sunshine, the beautiful sunshine even when the thermometer goes below zero, and the reflection of the sun's rays on the white snow. I love it all.") There were times when he found some of the Midwest American neighbours a bit on the provincial side. "I wish they had more culture even though agriculture suffered a little," he confided to Basanta Koomar Roy, who came down from Chicago to visit him on one occasion.[3] But the open-hearted friendliness and hospitality of people like the A. R. Seymours of the University of Illinois faculty (old friends of his son) and the warm and responsive welcome which he received from individual Americans in the places where he lectured led to enduring friendships.

Rathindranath Tagore, in his book,[4] tells how "Mrs. William Vaughan Moody, the wife of the (American) poet, . . . eagerly offered her hospitality to Father during his stay at Chicago." And he adds: "This contact led to a much cherished friendship lasting until the death of this remarkable woman, whose house was the refuge of many would-be artists and writers and a great attraction to all persons of eminence visiting the U.S.A."

Another memento of the quiet and happy character of that first unheralded visit of Tagore in America was provided many years later in a tribute to the poet written by the late Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry*,[5] for *The Golden Book of Tagore*. This was the magnificent book of paintings, drawings, and prose and verse dedications to Tagore, edited by Ramananda Chatterjee, editor of *The Modern Review* of Calcutta, which was presented to Tagore in 1931 in commemoration of his seventieth birthday.[6] Miss Monroe's contribution, published on page 169 under the title "Tagore in Chicago," recalls vividly the flavour of that period before fame made the poet a target for the faddists and curiosity seekers. Telling of her first encounter with Tagore, she writes:

> . . . *Poetry*, published in Chicago, was far away from India and even from London, where the Bengali poet had been sojourning, and its founder and editor had never heard of Tagore. But Ezra Pound, our foreign correspondent, had met him in London and induced him to permit the sending of some of the *Gitanjali* poems to the new little poet's magazine.
>
> I remember how excited we were when they arrived. Devotional poetry is rarely of value considered as poetry, but these were beautiful devotional poems, and the religious feeling they expressed was a tribute to the universal God of all races and creeds.
>
> A few days after the December number appeared, *The Chicago Tribune*, taking Tagore's poems for its text, devoted an editorial to *Poetry*'s international aspirations, and soon we were amazed to receive a letter signed by a younger Tagore in the University of Illinois, saying: "My father is visiting me here, and would like a few copies of the magazine containing his poems."
>
> This was news indeed—the distinguished Oriental poet, whom I had supposed to be at home in India, if not still in London, was for a time our neighbour in my own state ! I wrote him at once, inviting him to Chicago; and Mrs. William Vaughan Moody, widow of the poet, seconded the invitation with an offer of her generous hospitality.
>
> Soon after New Year's Day Mr. Tagore arrived with his son and exquisite little daughter-in-law, and during that winter the visit was repeated three or four times. This was a year before his Nobel Prize award and all its attendant publicity. So we were able to get acquainted with the poet without interference from the world's curiosity. We used to spend evenings around Mrs. Moody's fire listening to the chanting of poems in Bengali, or the recitation of their English equivalents, and feeling as if we were seated at the feet of some ancient wise man of the East, generous in his revelation of beauty. . . .

CHAPTER II

THE 1916 VISIT

THE TAGORE who visited America in the autumn and winter of 1916-17 was little changed from the man who chanted the songs by Mrs. Moody's fireside in Chicago, but the circumstances were far different. The award of the Nobel Prize in the autumn of 1913 had catapulted him to world fame and brought with it a knighthood. An article by the English novelist and critic May Sinclair, appearing in the May 1913 issue of *The North American Review* under the title "Song Offerings of Rabindra Nath Tagore,"[7] and another by Tagore's fellow countryman Basanta Koomar Roy, published in *The Open Court* (Chicago) in July 1913 under the heading "India's Greatest Living Poet" and quoted at length a month later in the widely read monthly magazine, *The American Review of Reviews*,[8] had made the poet known to thousands of Americans before the Nobel award was announced.

The latter was typical of the style of writing about Tagore which was to characterize American magazine features for years to come, almost invariably stressing the poet's illustrious family background, his personal "beauty," his voice, his versatility, his personality, and his poetic qualities. "It is said that poets are generally handsome," wrote Roy, as quoted in *The American Review of Reviews*. "Rabindranath was no exception to the general rule. He has long been famous in India both for his poetry and beauty. Indeed, his youthful portraits bear a striking resemblance to the poet of Galilee who wrote not a single verse, but who hallowed the world with the majestic poetry of his life and sayings. The Hindu poet's flowing hair, his broad, unfurrowed forehead, his bright, black, magnetic eyes, chiselled nose, firm but gentle chin, delicate sensitive hands, his sweet voice, pleasant smile, keen sense of humour, and his innate refinement make him a man of rare and charming personality. To look at him, is to notice the true embodiment of the artist."[9]

As to Tagore's versatility, wrote Roy :

> . . . He is a profound philosopher, a spiritual and patriotic leader, an historical investigator, a singer and composer, an able editor... a farsighted educator, a kind and considerate administrator of his vast "Zamin-

dary" estate. But he is, above all, the poet—the poet of love. Love flows from his heart, mind and soul in continuous stream, assuming all different forms in its windings from the gross to the spiritual, from the known to the unknown, from the finite to the infinite. He interprets love in all its multiform expressions—the love of mother, of son, of husband, wife, lover, beloved, patriot, of the Dionysian, nature-drunk, and the God-frenzied. Each and every one of these he portrays with his characteristic softness of touch that recalls the lyrics of Theophile Gautier, and with the exquisite felicity of Shelley and Keats.[10]

Articles in this vein poured off the press in increasing profusion and profuseness as translations and English originals of some of Tagore's works began to be published in America.[11] For the years 1913 and 1914 the selective list of periodicals indexed in the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* alone included no fewer than forty-four articles about Tagore, reviews of his work, and poems and short stories written by him. Typical titles: "Lyrical Voice of Bengal," *Current Opinion*, March 1913; "Modern Bengali Mystic," *Quarterly Review*, July 1913; "Occident Honors the Soul of Bengal," *Collier's*, December 20, 1913; and "Hindu of the Celtic Spirit," *The American Review of Reviews*, January 1914. Two biographies published in 1915—Ernest Rhys' *Rabindranath Tagore* (New York: The Macmillan Company) and Basanta K. Roy's *Rabindranath Tagore—The Man and His Poetry* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company), already cited—added further lustre to the Tagore image. An excellent introduction to the latter was written by the distinguished author, literary critic and historian Hamilton W. Mabie.[12]

The press meanwhile, in that era when "mystics" from the East were something of a vogue, found Tagore to be "good copy." Ten days after the Nobel Prize announcement, *The New York Times* published a full-page biographic feature on Tagore, including a pencil drawing of the poet and a reprint of eleven of his poems, in which it pointed out to its readers that Tagore was "no neglected poetic genius (but) is, and has been for some years, the accepted poet of the people that use the Bengali tongue...."[13] And a week after that the Sunday Book Review Section carried a lengthy and highly laudatory review of *The Gardener* which compared Tagore with Walt Whitman and spoke of "the singular beauty (of his writings) strong and delicate, and carved to the minute perfection of an ivory relief."[14] Newspapers in many parts of the country published the wire service accounts of the Nobel Prize award to Tagore and of the knighthood conferred on him by George V in June 1915. Ministers quoted from Tagore at length or built entire sermons around his religious verse. Women's clubs and local literary societies held lectures and discussions on Tagore's works. The favourable reviews of Tagore's books, some of which went into several printings, as well as the advertising publicity provided by the publishers and local book stores added to the build-up of his prestige.

It was not surprising, therefore, that when Tagore arrived in Seattle in the early autumn of 1916 for his second visit to America he was widely acclaimed. In a four-month tour from September 18, 1916, to January 17, 1917, in which he visited Portland (Oregon), San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Salt Lake City, Denver, Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Boston, and New York, and a number of college and university towns in between, Tagore lectured or gave readings from his poems, plays, and short stories to crowded audiences. At Iowa City, the President of Iowa State University declared "the coming of Sir Rabindranath Tagore. . . an event of so great importance that it ought to attract the interest of every student in the University," and the Senate Board on University Lectures issued a press release calling Tagore's lecture there "one of the notable events in the history of the State University. . .an opportunity of a lifetime."[15]

In New York City, where the League for Political Education placed Tagore at the head of "twenty-seven distinguished lecturers"[16] whom it would sponsor during the season, 2,000 people filled Carnegie Hall on November 21, 1916, to hear his lecture on "The Cult of Nationalism." Three weeks later, on December 12, on the occasion of Tagore's farewell recital in New York before his swing back to the West, there was a complete sell-out of all seats and standing room, and *The New York Times* reported that a thousand persons had to be turned away although "many people stood in the lobby in the futile hope of eventually getting in."[17]

Several nationally read magazines carried colourful feature articles on the visiting poet, describing his person, his manner, and his views on everything from the poetry of Poe and Whitman to women's suffrage and American reporters.

Joyce Kilmer, the American poet, published a full-page interview with the poet in *The New York Times*, giving a sympathetic description of the poet and reporting at length Tagore's views on the function of the poet, the poet's relationship to society, the public appreciation of poetry in East and West, and the need for exchanges of ideas and influence between Eastern and Western writers. ". . .The impression to be garnered from an unbiased reading of his work, and strengthened by conversation with him," wrote Kilmer, "is that he is not so much a philosopher or religious leader as a practical and extraordinarily prolific man of letters, with a keen appreciation of Western thought."[18]

Practically everywhere Tagore went during the 1916 visit he was feted and lionized as few other foreign writers in America have been. Civic leaders, educators, and cultural groups vied with each other to do him honour, and his lectures and recitals inevitably drew contingents of Tagore admirers eager to get close to the great man and, if possible, to speak to him after the performance. In some places, crowds followed him in the street.

The acclaim and adulation showered on Tagore by many Americans were genuine and heart-felt. Appalled by the bloodletting in Europe and fearful of being drawn into war, they found in Tagore's lectures on art, personality, meditation, woman's place in Eastern and Western society, and other subjects a welcome relief from the wartime headlines. The wisdom and the deep religious feeling revealed in his poems and plays offered a badly needed sense of stability and hope in a torn world. Even his "Nationalism" lectures with their bitter castigation of the "brutalizing" effects of imperialist nationalism and the mechanized age were listened to with interest.

There was also some misunderstanding. For some the very extravagance of the attention given the Indian poet and the uncritical fanaticism of certain of his following were distasteful. The late Theodore Maynard,[19] writing long afterwards in *The Commonweal* on the occasion of Tagore's death, told of his remorse in later years over hostile articles he had written at the time stemming from "prejudices which my acquaintance with the man have largely removed."

> It was not that his extraordinary good looks, as shown in the familiar photographs, had aroused my animosity. On the contrary, they overwhelmed me.... But perhaps I did have the notion that a poet who looked too much like a poet could not be genuine... .Most of all I had a deep distrust of Oriental "mystics."
>
> All the same, my animosity, such as it was, was directed not so much against Tagore himself as against his admirers....[20]

The sharpness with which Tagore criticized certain aspects of American life and Western civilization as a whole in his lectures and interviews was also bound to arouse feelings of resentment in some. Western civilization was "greedy," "self-interested," power-mad. America was "materialist," "wasteful," too much occupied with its concepts of "bigness" and with making money. American women had more leisure than they know what to do with and should "use their time for study and improvement." As Edward J. Thompson puts it in his study, already cited, "probably no foreigner has ever spoken more frankly to American audiences...."[21]

Sentiments voiced in the course of some of Tagore's press interviews seemed at times less than generous. Interviewed at San Francisco before sailing for India, he was asked what he had seen in America. Tagore's reply: "Much impotence and crudeness...."[22] There was of course much more to the interview, but it was this dictum that was picked up by the wire services and flashed to the American reading public. *The Literary Digest* called it a "Parthian Arrow,"[23] and the press, which for the most part had given Tagore friendly treatment throughout his visit despite his professed aversion for publicity, deplored what it felt was an unfair judgment.

"If he speaks the truth," wrote *The Newark News*, "ungraciousness is a minor affair....But the gist of his indictment, the lack of appreciation of spirituality, certainly bears no relation to the interest manifested in Tagore himself. This should give the Hindu seer hope."[24]

The New York *Sun*, while commenting that Tagore's words were "cast in the mould of most delicate consideration," posed the thought: "Mr. Tagore has seen many Americans. Does he know America? Have his audiences been composed of typical representatives of this great democracy? It does not seem to be an affirmative answer that flashes to us from the Golden Gate."[25]

And Dana Burnet, writing in the New York *Evening News*, found that Tagore "has made the mistake of his predecessors.... He has looked at our newness and said that we are crude.... We have, in fact, certain painters, poets, and prose writers who are doing crude work, that is to say work which is hewn out of raw truth, work which disdains the smug refinements of commercial expediency, work which is quite unadulterated by cheap efforts to lure the public taste. Possibly it is this work that Sir Rabindranath meant when he delivered his parting shot. But if so, he ought not to have been sorrowful about it. He ought to have rejoiced as one rejoices who perceives the sign of health in his fellow man."[26]

But it would be unfair to suggest that Tagore's criticisms of American life represented the total of his opinion on this country. On the contrary, the feeling of friendship and interest which had prompted him to send his son to college in the United States and which was to bring Tagore himself on five visits to this country was always dominant in what the poet had to say.

"America has the figure of youth and all that is best in Western civilization will eventually find lodgment here," he told the press as he arrived in New York City on November 18, 1916.[27]

On countless other occasions he was quoted in praise of the American poets, of American generosity and hospitality, of American organizational prowess, and of "the spirit of social service" that he found in the United States. And long afterwards, back home in India, he was to write:

> ...Spiritual ends of life are pursued with a keenness in America not found anywhere else in the modern world, and the production of wealth instead of hampering her inner vision has emancipated her imagination of a creative democracy which will offer the freedom of the human spirit. One cannot but feel that this spiritual adventure of the American civilization will find ever-renewing avenues of self-expression, that she will exploit her material resources for the well-being of humanity, conquering disease and spreading scientific habits of living, and offer by her directive control of scientific knowledge benefits which will spread far beyond her own geographical limits. The quest of spiritual realization which distinguishes America today and therefore attracts true prophets from other countries to her shores is sure to reveal itself in a new civilization in which Europe will be reborn, freed of its discordant inhibitions and heritage of dead past, and the vitality of a forward marching idealism

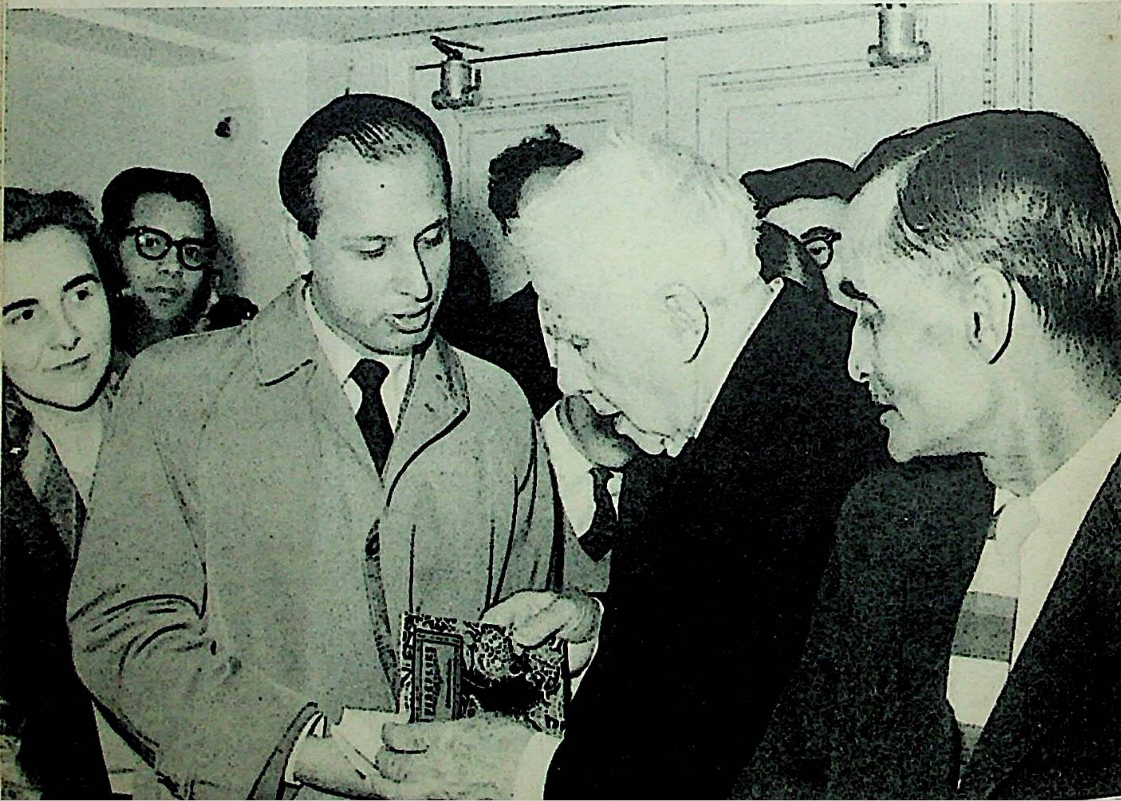
will find its growing perfection assimilating the true gifts of the East as well as the West in the unity of the human spirit.[28]

That Tagore was exhausted when he sailed from San Francisco in January 1917, is clear. Since leaving India in May 1916 he had been halfway around the world and part of the way back again, lecturing for several months in Japan and then in the United States, doing considerable writing on the side, and buffeted continually by the acclaim and tumult of the crowd. In the cross-country tour of the United States, the lecture schedule to which he subjected himself in the effort to raise money for the Santiniketan school at Bolpur was a taxing one and would have proved a physical and emotional strain to a man of younger years.[29]

The tour had been, nevertheless, a phenomenal success. James B. Pond, the lecture impressario who had arranged the tour, called it "an unparalleled triumph," and the poet, returning home, was able to pay off the debt of many years' standing, which he had incurred on behalf of the Santiniketan school soon after its founding in 1901. "His stay in America was crowded with engagements. He made new friends and received great kindness at their hands," wrote C. F. Andrews, Tagore's friend and devotee at Santiniketan. "In many ways he was satisfied with his visit, and felt that it had been a success."[30]

TAGORE CENTENARY IN THE UNITED STATES

American poet Robert Frost, who was the principal speaker at a dramatic "Tribute to Tagore" programme of the Asia Society in New York, examines a book by Tagore. On the right is Amiya Chakravarty, editor of the TAGORE READER.



THE 1920-21 VISIT

CHAPTER III

IN MARCH 1917, shortly after Tagore's return to India from his American triumph, Kshitish Chandra Neogy, writing in *The Open Court* (Chicago), commented on "the rapidity with which the fame of the newest star in the poetic firmament has been travelling over civilized earth" and raised the question "whether the halo that surrounds him (Tagore) today will endure. . . ." Was the enthusiasm for Tagore dictated partly by "the goading desire of the West for something fresh and quaint in the way of stimulants?" And would it not, as Tagore himself suspected, "turn out to be an ephemeral 'cult' that was to be rudely brushed aside in favour of a more engaging one tomorrow?"[31]

The questions were well put. Tagore was to return to America for three more visits during his lifetime, but the enthusiasms which reached their zenith in the early war years and during the 1916-17 visit were never again to be equalled. The contrast was notable when the Indian poet against the advice of his lecture agent returned to America in the autumn of 1920 for a lecture tour the primary purpose of which was to raise money for the establishment of his newly conceived Visva-Bharati (World Culture), or International University, at Bolpur. The Visva-Bharati concept, then as now, was a noble one, envisaging the establishment of a Bengali centre for the exchange of Eastern and Western Cultures, and the small groups of Americans to whom he addressed his pleas for support were sympathetic. Contributions were forthcoming, such as the handsome Rs. 50,000 annual grant from Mrs. Willard Straight of New York, which enabled the establishment of Sriniketan, the rural development department of the University, early in 1922. But the five-month visit was on the whole discouraging, and the poet —completely unsuited by taste and temperament to his self-assigned chore of money raising and oppressed by postwar American attitudes and by the tempo, noise and clamour of New York City, where he spent most of his time secluded in a room at the Hotel Algonquin—was sick at heart, bitter, and depressed during most of his stay.

Had the newspapers and the literary coteries lavished on him some of the praise that had distinguished his reception in the years before America's entry into the war, it is possible that Tagore would have reacted far differently to what he witnessed in America in that autumn and winter of 1920-21. But a fickle public, caught up in a wave of cynicism and isolationism after World War I, was no longer captivated by the "mystic" and "idealistic" preachings of "the prophet from the East." In the words of E. J. Thompson, it had "passed from extravagant homage to disregard."[32] It is significant that, although *The New York Times* printed a sympathetic news item on Tagore's arrival and the purpose of his visit[33] and carried a brief announcement a few weeks later on the staging of two of his plays by a New York theatre group,[34] these were the only mentions of Tagore in that newspaper during the entire five-month period he was in America—and four of those months were spent in New York City itself.

But there were other reasons than the transience of fame which caused the poet anguish.

"I was born a poet, and it is difficult for me to suffer myself to be rudely hustled in my path by busy men who have no leisure for ideas," he wrote to his friend and colleague at Santiniketan, the Rev. Charles F. Andrews, from New York on November 30, 1920, a month after his arrival. "I am not an athlete. I do not belong to the arena. The stare of the curious crowd scorches my soul. And yet I, of all persons, am called upon to force my way into the thick of the Western public with a mission for which I have never been trained."[35]

And again, weeks later after a swing through the South, the same plaintive cry is heard in a letter written from Chicago on February 24, 1921:

> The fool who is content to do nothing whatever is at any rate free from care; but the one who tries in vain to change the face of the world knows no peace. I long to go back to my ducks, and yet I madly whirl round these manufacturing towns like a breath of the wild south breeze stirring the leaves of the documents of an attorney's office. Does it not know that these leaves do not shelter the flowers that wait for its whisper of love? Why should I be anything else but a poet? Was I not born a music-maker?[36]

Throughout the pages of letters from this period the poet's loneliness, sense of frustration, and longing for the quiet peace of the *ashram* at Bolpur run like a dark thread.

> In this country I live in the dungeon of the Castle of Bigness. My heart is starved. Day and night I dream of Santiniketan, which blossoms like a flower in the unbounded freedom of simplicity. I know how truly great Santiniketan is. . . .[37]

Many of the passages in these letters were critical of America and of Western civilization. Some of his comments are compassionate: "What makes me feel so sad, in this country, is the fact that people here do not know that they are not happy. They are proud, like the sandy desert, which is proud of its glitter."[38]

An insight into the reason for such deeply sensitive reactions is provided by Charles F. Andrews, the recipient of these letters. "Tagore," he writes, by way of introducing the letters from America, "suffered from illness during his visit in America, and this brought with it depression of mind."[39] And he adds later on: "Gradually, as his health improved, his stay in America became brighter, and he wrote more cheerfully. He was specially delighted with his first visit to the Southern States, and deeply appreciated the warmth of heart he found among every class of people in those regions."[40]

Tagore wrote him from Houston, Texas, on February 23, 1921:

> I have not written to you for some time. For I am tired to the profound depth of my being. Yet, since coming to Texas, I have felt as it were a sudden coming of Spring into my life through a breach in the ice castle of Winter. It has come to me like a revelation that all these days my soul had been thirsting for the draught of sunshine poured from the beaker of infinite space. The sky has embraced me, and the warmth of its caresses thrills me with joy.[41]

But there were other factors having nothing to do with America or its people which weighed on the poet and affected his mood while in the United States during that unsatisfactory visit of 1920-21.

Back in India reaction against British rule, marked by violence in some instances and by the revival of the non-cooperation movement, seemed to him a contradiction of much that he stood for.

"I am afraid I shall be rejected by my own people when I go back to India," he wrote Andrews from New York on February 8. "My solitary cell is awaiting me in my motherland. In their present state of mind, my countrymen will have no patience with me, who believe God to be higher than my country."[42]

And again on March 5, from Chicago :

> I love my fellow-beings and prize their love. Yet I have been chosen by destiny to ply my boat at that spot where the current is against me. What irony of fate is this, that I should be preaching cooperation of cultures between East and West on this side of the sea just at the moment when the doctrine of non-cooperation is preached on the other side ![43]

There was an inner struggle, too, based on misgivings about the mission that had brought him to America in the first place. He was plagued by fears that the International University (Visva-Bharati) for which he was seeking money and support might in the end dwarf his first love, Santiniketan, and by its very bigness and organization spoil the simplicity and tranquillity of the "Abode of Peace" at Bolpur. Bound for Europe aboard the S. S. Rhyndam on the first leg of his homeward trip from America in March 1921, the poet wrote his friend:

> . . . .I am unwell and utterly homesick; and the vision of home which haunts my mind night and day is "Amader Santiniketan."[44] But the big towers of the International University obstruct its view. I am tired, to the marrow of my bones, trying all these months for a purpose and working in a direction which is against the natural current of my inner being.[45]

Ironically, Tagore was to pass from the relatively low key of his reception in the United States to a triumphant three-month tour of Europe, in which he was feted and lionized as few other poets have been, before returning home to India in the summer of 1921.

CHAPTER IV

THE 1929 EPISODE

IT WAS TAGORE the idealist educator reduced to the unaccustomed and unpalatable role of fund raiser who wandered in the wilderness of public apathy and private disillusionment in that unhappy autumn-winter visit of 1920-21—not Tagore the poet-philosopher, novelist, and playwright. Popular interest in his writings was still widespread in the United States, even if somewhat abated from the level enjoyed during his earlier visit, and short stories, novels, plays, and collections of essays and verse by Tagore continued to pour off the American presses, in addition to a steady stream of magazine articles by and about him.

The publishers' lists are revealing. In 1921 there appeared *The Wreck*, a novel; *The Fugitive*, a collection of verse; *Glimpses of Bengal*, excerpts from some of his early letters; and *Thought Relics and Stray Birds* (verse); in 1925, his novel, *Gora;* in 1926, *Broken Ties and other Stories*, *Red Oleanders* (a one-act drama), and a collection of Tagore's poems; in 1928, *Fireflies*, still another collection; and in 1929, the American edition of *Letters to a Friend*. The list goes on into the nineteen thirties—*The Religion of Man*, *Sheaves: Poems and Songs of Rabindranath Tagore*, *The Golden Boat*, *The Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore*.

American periodicals meanwhile gave the lie to any suggestion that Tagore was *passé*, as far as the American reading public was concerned. The *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* lists no fewer than fifteen articles and other contributions by or about Tagore for the year 1921 alone. Twelve more are listed for the period 1922-24, sixteen for the years 1925-28, and thirteen in 1929-30. The popular illustrated magazine *The Mentor*, published in New York, devoted practically its entire May 1921 issue to Tagore and India. In addition to a portrait of the poet on its cover—the bearded face cradled in one hand, the dark eyes fixed on the reader with a searching, penetrating look—the magazine featured an article by Tagore on "Woman," a poem composed by the poet especially for *The Mentor* under the same title, a biographical commentary on Tagore, photos of members of his family[46] and of the students and staff at Santiniketan, paintings by Abanindranath Tagore, the poet's nephew, and the Indian Muslim artist S. Fyzee-Rahamin, and a number of other pictures and portraits of India and Indians.

James B. Pond, Tagore's one-time lecture agent, in an interview reprinted in *The Literary Digest* of October 6, 1923, was described as being fond of Tagore as of "no other lecturer he has ever managed."[47] And the *Boston Evening Transcript* of April 4, 1925, recalling the deep religious feeling revealed in the poet's lectures and readings during his visits to America, declared:

> Tagore is not a Christian; but his attitude reminds us that there was a time when Christianity was an Asiatic creed—it was the time of the original Gospel. Again and again he seemed to be more Christian than the Christians.[48]

It was evident, too, that Tagore, the personality, still remained vivid in some memories. In April 1929—eight years after the poet's latest visit to American shores—*The New York Times*, in an editorial campaign against noise in New York City, reminded its readers "how this quiet lover of human fellowship," when offered an apology for the uncommonly cold weather on one occasion during his visit, replied, "Oh, it is not the cold, it is the noise."[49]

Tagore, for his part in those post-World War I years, was back in India, building his Visva-Bharati, striving—not always with success—to remain aloof from the violent political passions which were rending India, and meantime pursuing his phenomenal literary output. Several times he went abroad—to China and Japan, to South America and Europe, to Europe again and the Near East, to Southeast Asia and Ceylon.

Whether he was travelling in India or in the outer world, or writing by the open window at his house in Bolpur, his message was always the same: the need for a meeting of East and West, for the East to benefit by the science and technology and organizational genius of the West, and the West to recover its "soul" by drinking at the spiritual fountains of Eastern philosophy. Always there was a tribute:

> It does not hurt my pride to acknowledge that, in the present age, Western humanity has received its mission to be the teacher of the world; that her science, through the mastery of laws of matter, is to liberate human souls from the dark dungeon of matter.[50]

And always a challenge:

> The most significant fact of modern days is the fact that the West has met the East. Such a momentous meeting of humanity, in order to be fruitful, must have in its heart some great emotional idea, generous and creative. There can be no doubt that God's choice has fallen upon the knights-errant of the West for the service of the present age; arms and armour have been given to them; but have they yet realized in their

> hearts the singleminded loyalty to their cause, which can resist all temptations of bribery from the devil? The world today is offered to the West. She will destroy it if she does not use it for a great creation of man. The materials for such a creation are in the hands of science; but the creative genius is in Man's spiritual ideal.[51]

But usually, too, there was the note of protest and reproof:

> . . .I have realized all the more strongly that the dominant collective idea in the Western countries is not creative. . .the West has not sent out its humanity to meet the man in the East, but only its machine.[52]

The hurried pace of life in the West, "the immense power of money and of organized propaganda," and what he regarded as the sacrifice of the human personality to the machine in a frantic struggle for material gain were appalling to Tagore. "The civilization of the West has in it the spirit of the machine which must move; and to that movement human lives are offered as fuel, keeping up the steam-power," he wrote in his essay on "The Spirit of Freedom" in *Creative Unity*.[53] And in a speech at Milan, Italy, in the summer of 1926 he asked his audience:

> Do you realize how rigid ugliness is everywhere apparent—in your cities, in your commerce, the same monotonous mask—so that nowhere is there room for living expression of the spirit?. . .Your very science is. . .becoming your destroyer.[54]

It was in that same summer that Tagore was quoted in the British press as having stated that he had no intention of re-visiting America. The late Ellery Sedgwick, editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, who had met and admired the poet-philosopher on one of his earlier visits, was concerned by the "strictures" of America allegedly expressed by Tagore in connection with this statement and wrote him in December 1926, asking him if he would be "willing to write out what was in your mind quite candidly."[55] The poet's reply, published in the June 1927 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, deplored the fact "that some ill-fated remark of mine, hastily uttered in answer to a casual question. . .has been netted and pinned down, with its ephemeral wings, in some newspapers of yours."[56] Whatever he might have said, wrote Tagore, "had its origin in some shifting impression of mine whose natural destination was time's dustbin" and was a transient reaction to "the impact of passing experience. . .to be modified or effaced by further evidence and reasoned thoughts."[57]

But there was no reluctance to explain why he was disinclined to revisit the United States. The poet fired off a veritable barrage of indictments which ran on for several columns,[58] and, underneath it all, the memories of the failure of the 1920-21 visit—still rankling.

Despite Tagore's expressed disinclination "to risk any recurrence of the same," he did come back to the United States, after all. The occasion was the spring of 1929, following an address given by him as India's representative at the National Council of Education conference in Vancouver, Canada.

But the experience this time was even less fortunate than the east-coast visit of 1920-21. Attempting to embark from Vancouver, preparatory to entering the United States at Seattle, Tagore was kept waiting for an unconscionable period of time in the U.S. immigration office,[59] and was handled in what he took to be a rude and insulting manner when finally interviewed. Among other things, it appears, the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature was asked if he could read and write. Outraged and resentful, the poet apparently was on the verge of forgoing his visit then and there, but decided to enter the United States anyway because of lecture commitments there. Nevertheless, a few days later, after lecturing in Los Angeles, he abruptly cancelled the remainder of his anticipated tour and sailed for home. His departure was accompanied by the publication in San Francisco and Los Angeles newspapers of interviews in which he bitterly criticized the American immigration laws and attitudes which he felt were then prevailing on the American West Coast.

The situation, that led to a decision to cancel the rest of the visit and return home was summarized by Tagore at Tokyo: "I came into the country but my mind was not at ease. I went to Los Angeles, stayed there and lectured. But all the time I was impressed by the spirit in the air."

At Tokyo, as elsewhere, Tagore hastened to absolve the American people as a whole from any blame for the immigration office incident and to protest his friendship for the United States. "I cannot believe that their laws and regulations represent the spirit of the people, a truly great people....I had been received with kindness in the Eastern States, overrun with kindness. People have listened to me with respect and received my message sincerely. That is why it hurt so much this time...."[60]

CHAPTER V

THE FINAL VISIT

HAD TAGORE'S brief visit to the West Coast been his last experience of America, the image of Tagore and America might have suffered, even as it did after the unsatisfactory (from Tagore's viewpoint) 1920-21 sojourn. But fortunately the poet was able to return the following year for a visit of several weeks which, despite another bout of illness, was to prove a personal triumph for him and demonstrate again the esteem and affection in which he was held by a vast number of the American people, not only as a poet and philosopher but also as a representative of his country. It was not the best time to come to America. The stock market crash had occurred a year before and the country was entering the first stages of a serious economic depression. But almost as if to atone for the immigration office incident, which had angered and bewildered many Americans, the reception given to Tagore by the press and the public when he arrived in New York in the autumn of 1930 for a final lecture tour could hardly have been a more heartwarming one.

The newspapers, which had virtually ignored the poet on his 1920-21 visit, devoted columns of copy to interviews with Tagore following his arrival on October 9 aboard the S.S. Bremen, and civic and cultural leaders as in earlier times outbid each other in honouring him at social functions. When the poet was seized with a mild heart attack at New Haven, Connecticut, in the second week after his arrival and forced to cancel the remainder of his scheduled lectures, numerous messages of sympathy were showered on him at the home of Dr. W. L. Ladd of the Yale University Divinity School where he was staying as a guest. And George Foster Peabody, prominent banker and philanthropist, brought the Hampton Singers, the famous choral group of Negro singers of the Hampton Institute in Virginia, all the way to Connecticut to serenade the visitor at his bedside.

For a week Tagore lay ill at New Haven and then, despite his physician's orders, travelled to Philadelphia where, at a public gathering, sponsored by the American Society of Friends, he appealed for financial aid to improve conditions in the Indian villages and assist him in his programme for the education of India's young women. "I could not let this opportunity go," the venerable old poet told his audience, commenting that he would rather kill himself than pass up this opportunity to receive assistance from "you people who have helped others so often and would help India now." He praised Dr. Harry Timbres of the Society of Friends who had been out "to survey our village work (and) was deeply impressed by the great need for medical help and efforts to improve the sanitary conditions of our poor people."[61]

A few days later he was in New York City again where at a luncheon in his honour given by a group of prominent American educators on November 6, he furthered his appeals for funds for the education of India's women. Reminding his listeners that his Visva-Bharati University at Bolpur was the only co-educational institution in India and expressing the hope that he would be able to found a university for women before he died, Tagore told the American educators:

> If the women could have a proper education, there would be a great future for our country. Women have wonderful courage and a power of self-sacrifice and devotion that is unique. Through the emancipation of their rights, we will have great results. I wish to leave as my last gift to our women the gift of education.[62]

Though the times were difficult, aid in various forms was pledged to the poet in response to these and other pleas by American individuals and organizations long interested in India. And—aside from the fees for various speeches given by the poet—he was able to sell some of his paintings as an additional source of income in support of his programmes.

The exhibition of Tagore's paintings at Boston, Philadelphia and New York were new features of this last visit of the poet in America. It was only the year before at the age of sixty-eight that, long subject to the urge to paint, Tagore had taken up this medium seriously.

His work was highly experimental, evolving out of shapes and forms which in the beginning were nothing more than some rather elaborate calligraphic doodling, joining together bits of music and lines of verse. But from this he had branched out into weird and fantastic shapes of plant and animal life, primitive landscapes, and a kind of sombre and angular portraiture in which some critics found a dramatic and haunting quality.[63] Although many of his paintings and drawings had the air of having been done on the spur of the moment, were lacking in technical discipline, and in some instances were as primitive in medium as they were in concept and execution,[64] the poet had been persuaded to take along a selection of them when he went to Europe in the spring of 1930 to deliver the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford University. There during the spring and summer his work was exhibited in galleries in London, Paris, Berlin and other cities and created something of a sensation in art circles. Tagore himself was modest enough in his claims: "My pictures are my versification in lines. If by chance they are entitled to claim recognition it must be primarily for some rhythmic significance of form which is ultimate, and not for any interpretation of an idea, or representation of fact."[65] The fact that the poet in his advanced years had revealed this additional talent created much excitement among his admirers. This excitement was shared when he came to America where, despite Tagore's own disclaimers of artistic vision or concept,[66] hundreds of art lovers and Tagore admirers flocked to the exhibitions of his paintings, to study these graphic expressions of the poet's fantasy.

But now, as before, it was Tagore the champion of East-West unity, Tagore the philosopher, and Tagore the articulate friend and critic and accuser of Western civilization who drew most of the headlines and the crowds. From the day of his arrival, he was in the news with his views on Indian home rule,[67] on the character of the British administration in India, on Hindu-Muslim unity, on the disruption of village life, and the need of American support for Indian freedom.

As ever there were differences of opinion on what he had to say. Tagore was fresh from a visit to Russia when he arrived in the United States in that autumn of 1930 and was brimming with enthusiasm for what he had seen of Russian educational progress. But in his comments to the press on this subject, the poet had nothing to say of other conditions in Russia where at the very time of his visit a mass execution of professors and engineers had taken place and where police terror, wholesale arrests, and the suppression of political rights were a commonplace under the Communist regime. Some felt that by thus giving a one-sided picture of Communist Russia the poet was doing a disservice to the thousands of victims of the Communist system and lending the prestige of his name to what was, in effect—wittingly or unwittingly—pro-Soviet propaganda.

Actually Tagore, even while in Russia, had been strongly critical of the Communist system's use of violence and its teaching of intolerance and class hatred, and had warned against the consequences of these practices and tendencies in a long interview published in the Soviet Government newspaper *Izvestia:*[68]

> But I find here certain contradictions . . . attitudes of mind . . . about the method of radical social improvement. I must ask you, are you doing . . . a service by arousing in the minds of those under your training anger, class hatred, and revengefulness against those whom you consider to be your enemies?
>
> There must be disagreement where minds are allowed to be free. It would be not only an uninteresting world but a sterile world of mechanical regularity if all of our opinions were forcibly made alike. If you have a mission which includes all humanity, for the sake of that living humanity you must acknowledge the existence of differences of temperament and of opinion. Opinions are constantly changed and rechanged through the free circulation of intellectual forces and moral persuasion. Violence begets violence and blind stupidity. Freedom of mind is needed for the reception of truth; terror hopelessly kills it. The brute cannot subdue the brute. It is only the man who can do it. This is being proved every day in our human history.

Tagore's restraint during his American visit with regard to such aspects of Soviet life may have been motivated by some sense of obligation to his recent hosts, or the poet may have preferred to ignore the more sordid side of what many in that era were wont to regard as "the great experiment" in hopes that eventually things would improve. Whatever the motivations, his appraisal of a single facet of Soviet society to the exclusion of all others appeared to be naive, if not lacking in candour, and was bewildering to many Americans.

But there was no equivocation in the Tagore who spoke out on his two favourite themes—the emancipation of India and closer cultural ties between India and the West. At the time when the first Round-Table Conference was taking place in London a newspaper reporter went to the New York apartment where Tagore was a guest of his long-time friend Leonard K. Elmhirst and asked the poet how he thought the Conference would turn out. It was too early to say, Tagore replied. But then he added a remark that, for thousands of Americans who read it the next day, was a classic summary of India's position at that time. "Of course we want a great deal more freedom politically than we have," said Tagore. "We want to serve our country, and all depends on how much they will give us. If they do not give us what we want, there will be a perpetual struggle for there is no chance of this revolution, if it can be called a revolution, dying of old age."[69]

In posing the problem of Western and Eastern civilization, the poet demonstrated time and again the rapier-like challenge and the thought-provoking capacity that had distinguished his messages to America in the past. On the evening of November 25, 1930, three hundred and fifty noted Americans, leaders of professional and academic life, gathered at a banquet at the Biltmore Hotel in New York in honour of Tagore. Former President Calvin Coolidge was among the promoters of the occasion, which was officially sponsored by a group of prominent Americans, headed by Henry Morgenthau and known as the Tagore Reception Committee, and by the India Society of America. Sinclair Lewis, the American author, who had just won the Nobel Prize for Literature, was among the guests, having come especially to do honour to his illustrious predecessor.

Still feeble from his recent heart attack, the aged poet told the gathering, "I wish I were stronger and I wish I were younger when I come to greet you —the great people of this earth."[70] But he was unsparing in his criticism and in his challenge to the nations of the West.

> You cannot realize how we of the East have suffered. There is between us the great barrier of your own material prosperity. I have great love and admiration for the West not only for what I have received from it but for what it has been gathering for the future of man—its own science.
>
> But today we know that in spite of all this wealth and prosperity you are not happy. I have not seen any sign of happiness in all the countries of the West. Your country and the countries of Europe are lost and still

groping for the spiritual qualities of the East.

In a passionate plea for greater understanding of India's problems and aspirations, the poet called on the West to "complete the voyage to India" begun by Columbus.

> You have not come to India over the unknown, unchartered sea of mystery to learn the spirit of Asia. Come in the proper spirit and claim your share. The things that have eternal values belong to all humanity and all times. Come to us, accept us, acknowledge us, and realize that we are all brothers.[71]

Even as Tagore was making his impassioned appeals for America to seek "the spiritual qualities of the East," an ancient nation of the East, loved and admired by Tagore no less than by the rest of the world for its spiritual and cultural traditions, was preparing the military machine that in the next decade and a half would subjugate and terrorize a great portion of Eastern Asia. And there was innate contradiction in his uncritical praise of the Soviet educational system which, with its emphasis on atheism, if used as a model for India, as Tagore on one occasion suggested it might be,[72] would have endangered the very bases of the cultural and religious traditions he himself loved so well.

There was no doubting the earnestness and sincerity, or the impassioned eloquence, with which this man carried on his life-long fight for a bridging of the gap between eastern and western cultures. And thousands of Americans read and listened to the appeals of Tagore with the same kind of yearning towards understanding of the East that had motivated Emerson and Thoreau in an earlier time and found such dramatic expression in the soaring imagery of Walt Whitman's *Passage to India.*[73]

Passage O Soul to India !
Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables.
Not you alone proud truths of the world,
Nor you alone ye facts of modern science,
But myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables,
The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,
The deep diving bibles and legends,
The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions;
O you temples fairer than lilies pour'd over by the rising sun !
O you fables spurning the known, eluding the hold of the known,
mounting to heaven !
You lofty and dazzling towers, pinnacled, red as roses, burnish'd
with gold !
Towers of fables immortal fashion'd from mortal dreams !
You too I welcome and fully the same as the rest !
You too with joy I sing.

The interest in the great poet and the people he represented as well as the esteem and affection with which he had come to be regarded in the United

States were increasingly manifest as this last visit of Tagore to America neared its end. In view of the poet's health and his advancing years it was evident that he might never again visit America's shores, and there was a general eagerness to show appreciation of his work, to hear any last message that he might like to leave.

On November 29, 1930, accompanied by Sir Ronald Lindsay, the British Ambassador, Tagore was received by President Hoover at the White House. The audience lasted but a few minutes and the nature of the conversation between the poet and the President was never revealed, but Tagore returning to New York from Washington told newspaper reporters that the visit had been "a delightful one and one that will live in my memory."

There was an unforgettable scene when Tagore addressed a meeting of the New York Historical Society on the evening of December 8, 1930. The day before, the press had announced that this would be the poet's "farewell message to America." The subject chosen, viz., "The First and Last Prophets of Persia," was not one which could be expected to have very wide popular appeal. Yet 2,000 persons pushed their way into the Crystal Room of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel where the lecture was to be given and spilled over into the stairways and lobbies.

This was not the final public appearance of Tagore in America. That was to follow a few evenings later on the eve of his departure for Europe, and it was to contain all those elements of music, poetry, drama and the dance in which the poet was most at home. The occasion was a joint recital of poetry and the dance by Tagore and the famous American dancer, Ruth St. Denis, and her company, presented at the Broadway Theatre on the night of December 14, 1930. The programme must have reminded Tagore of those many informal and happy performances with his beloved students and staff under the trees at Santiniketan. The eminent American philosopher Will Durant was there and opened the performance by paying tribute to the poet and expressing to him the appreciation of the many American admirers of his work. Tagore read several of his poems, including "Rain Storm," and "My Bride and I," in English and in Bengali. Miss St. Denis and her company performed a number of dances based on Oriental themes. In the finale the poet was surrounded on the stage by a group of dancers and children who wreathed his neck with garlands of flowers.

It was a moving occasion and Tagore's response to it was even more moving still. The following day the press announced that "at the expressed wish of Sir Rabindranath" the proceeds from the performances were to be donated to a fund for the relief of New York City's unemployed.[74] The gesture was typical of one who had done so much to call attention to the needs of India's millions and who, in bidding farewell to America's millions, thought first of helping those in need. At midnight on December 15, 1930, Tagore sailed from New York for England on the first leg of a homeward voyage from which he was never to return to America.

THE FINAL YEARS

CHAPTER VI

IN THE SPRING of 1931, following Tagore's last visit to the United States, the American Tagore Committee was formed in New York by a group of Americans prominent in academic and financial life who expressed their intention "to cooperate culturally and financially" with Visva-Bharati. One of the founders of this group, Dr. Harry Timbres—the same whom Tagore had praised for his earlier survey of rural health needs in India when the poet spoke at Philadelphia—came to India soon afterwards, bringing his family with him, and spent several years in the Bolpur region assisting Tagore in his programme of rural development, instituting malaria controls, and providing medical services and sanitary education to the villages. Others provided financial support for this work and for the International University and Santiniketan. There was no "poetry" or "poetic appreciation" in this; rather the practical work of practical men and women eager to assist a veteran educator and true humanitarian in the realization of a practical dream. But for Tagore, who is said to have considered his educational projects at Bolpur to be his "chief and most enduring poem," the sustained interest of Americans in his work provided a living link of friendship in his later years.

Those were years of world struggle, the last decade of the poet's life, a time destined to prove the quality of personal friendships and put innermost principles to the test. In India the struggle for independence was approaching its climax. Elsewhere in the world the "excesses of nationalism" against which the poet had inveighed for years erupted with ugly ferocity. Finally, with the marriage of convenience between Communism and Nazism in the summer of 1939, there came World War II. "The demon of barbarity . . . emerged"—to use Tagore's expression for it—spreading its "poisonous fumes of hatred."[75]

In June 1940, with western Europe overrun, an ailing Tagore cabled a message from Kalimpong to President Franklin D. Roosevelt which bespoke the ultimate hope and trust he had in America.

> Today we stand in awe before the fearfully destructive force that so suddenly has swept the world. Every moment I deplore the smallness of our means and the feebleness of our voice, for India is so utterly inadequate to stem the tide of evil that has menaced the permanence of civilization.

> All our individual political problems are merged today into one supreme world of politics which I believe is seeking help in the United States as the last refuge of spiritual man, and these few lines of mine merely convey my hope, even if unnecessary, that the United States will not fail in her mission to stand against the universal disaster that appears so imminent.[76]

Tagore lived to see the introduction of the Lend-Lease programme by which the United States was able to contribute to the defence of the civilization to which the poet was as dedicated as he was to that of his native land. But he did not live to see the outcome of this world struggle, nor the persistent efforts by which the United States sought and helped to bring about the creation of a United Nations organization dedicated to economic and social improvement and to the peaceful solution of international differences, which were, in essence, the credo of the poet's life. Neither could he have known of the official urging and support being given by the American government for the early realization of India's independence.

Fourteen months after his message to President Roosevelt, Tagore was dead in the house in Calcutta where he was born and to which he had been brought from his little cottage at Santiniketan. His death came as a shock to thousands of Americans in all parts of the country who remembered his force and eloquence on the lecture platform and to countless others who had never seen the poet-philosopher but who had read his writings and learned of the Tagore legend in the universities and colleges of America. Newspaper accounts of Tagore's passing paid tribute to him as "India's greatest man of letters," "the soul of Bengal," "great scholar and educator," and "ambassador of friendship between East and West," and recalled his visits to America, his condemnation of aggression, his significance in India's cultural renaissance, and his years of effort on behalf of the people of his own country and of the world.

Many American newspapers published editorials on the poet's death, commenting on his role as a world philosopher and prophet of Indian Independence. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, noting the end of "the long and rather beautiful dream that was the life of Rabindranath Tagore," recalled how Tagore had questioned and condemned the Western world. "That same world may regard Rabindranath Tagore as too much of a dreamer; a man of beautiful words," the newspaper commented. "Perhaps his words don't seem so mystical amid the crashing world sounds of today."[77]

The Washington Post reminded its readers: "Tagore believed that East and West do not represent antagonistic and irreconcilable attitudes of the human mind, but that they are complementary, and since Tagore's own work and thought represented a fusion of East and West, the fate of his poems and dramas at the hands of later generations...may be the test of whether the age-old gulf between Asia and Europe can ever be bridged."[78]

But it was the *San Francisco Chronicle* which perhaps best captured the magic of the poet's imagery, quoting a moving passage from Tagore which, for many Americans, might well have served as an epitaph for a man who was above all else a lover of his homeland:

> The clouds have blotted away the stars and we wonder when the dawn shall begin. For we are humble and suffer and bear the burden of power and hide our faces and stifle our sobs in the dark. But the morrow shall be ours.[79]

TAGORE CENTENARY IN THE UNITED STATES

The Los Angeles programme included a talk by Dr. Dastur Bode (centre) on his experiences as secretary to Tagore, and a dance interpretation from "Gitanjali," performed by Sushila Janadas (right) and narrated by Mrs. Vivian Thind (left), American President of the India-American Cultural Association.

CHAPTER VII

THE TAGORE CENTENARY IN AMERICA

TODAY, twenty years after his death, friends and admirers of Tagore in America are laying plans for the celebration of the centenary of his birth. The Rabindranath Tagore Centenary Committee in America, organized spontaneously in 1959 and comprising some of the outstanding American scholars in the field of Indic studies, has announced a programme of activities with which it hopes to be able to pay suitable honour to the great Indian poet, philosopher, artist, and educator. Among its many objectives the Committee plans: to establish Tagore professorships and scholarships in Asian literature and culture at various American universities and colleges; to offer prizes to American scholars for the best essays on aspects of Tagore's life and works; to foster the production of Tagore's plays on the American stage; and to encourage the publication of articles on Tagore in American periodicals. A lively interest has been expressed in arrangements for lectures, documentary films showings, and other cultural activities on the life and message of Tagore, and it is hoped also to collect endowment funds for the International University of Visva-Bharati "so that his ideals and humanism may be preserved."

The Committee is headed by Professor W. Norman Brown, noted Indologist, professor of Sanskrit, and director of the graduate school of arts and sciences of the University of Pennsylvania. Its executive secretary is Prafulla C. Mukherji of New York, former research chemist with the United States Steel Corporation, whose father was a close friend of Tagore's father and who was a devoted disciple of Tagore even before coming to the United States from his native Calcutta in 1906. Norman Cousins, author and editor of *The Saturday Review*, and Pearl Buck, the noted American author, are honorary chairmen. The Vice-President of the Committee is Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, Professor of Comparative Religions and Literature at Boston University, formerly Professor of English Literature at Calcutta University and for years an instructor and private secretary to Rabindranath Tagore at

Santiniketan. Other members of the Committee are located at universities throughout the country—at the University of California, Chicago, Michigan, Columbia, Yale, Howard, Georgetown, and the American University in Washington, to name but a few. Research scholars at the Universities of North Carolina, Florida, and Colorado are among those who have signified to the Committee their interest in preparing comprehensive studies of Tagore's impact on America.

The American Tagore Committee's programme was already in progress as this was being prepared for the press. On February 9, 1961, New York City witnessed the premiere performance of *The King of the Dark Chamber* at the Jan Hus Theatre. Performed by a mixed company of Indian and American actors and directed by Krishna Shah of Bombay, this was the first production of this famous play by a professional company in America, although there have been many performances of this and other Tagore plays by amateur dramatics groups in the past. Krishna Shah was asked to direct the New York presentation after Miss Patricia Newhall and Van Joyce, two of the play's producers, saw an earlier production of the play, produced with an all-American cast at the State University of Iowa under Shah's direction in the spring of 1960. Shah, who studied and taught in the graduate school of the State University of Iowa from 1958-60 on a grant from the Indian National Theatre and a fellowship from the Iowa institution, entered the Tagore play in the Midwest Colleges Drama Conference at which it took honours.

The New York performance, which played to an opening night audience that included India's permanent representative to the United Nations, C. S. Jha, and the Indian Consul General in New York, S. K. Roy, was hailed in the New York press. The drama critic of *The New York Times* called the play "a striking amalgamation of mime, song, dance and poetry," and theatre critics writing in the *New York Herald-Tribune*, *World-Telegram and Sun*, and *New York Post* praised the play for "its vigour and movement" as well as for its text, which—as one writer put it—is "strewn with riches." Particular plaudits went to Shah, to the Indian actress Surya Kumari, who played the part of the Queen, to Brock Peters, the King, and to two other Indian actresses, Rahila of Calcutta and Madhur Jaffrey of Delhi, who played supporting roles.

Other performances of Tagore's plays were being planned by student players at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, at Yale and Howard Universities, and at Antioch College in Ohio.

Additional events scheduled included:

—a panel discussion of "The Poetry of Tagore," sponsored by the Association of Asian Studies, at Chicago, on March 27, with Professor Punya Sloka Ray of Utkal University, Professor Naresh Guha of Jadavpur University, Professor Buddhadeva Bose, and Dr. Prabhakar Machwe participating, along with American Tagore specialists;

Bhaskar played the role of THAKURDADA in Tagore's poetic fantasy "King of the Dark Chamber," which was a hit of New York's 1961 theatre season.

—the first performance of a dance suite set to poems of Tagore and interpreted by the American dancer Haddaseh, to be given in New York City, also in March, under the title, "India, a Dancer's Pilgrimage";

—a ceremony in honour of Tagore at Town Hall in New York City on April 9, featuring readings by Poet Robert Frost and other American men of letters in tribute to the memory of Tagore; and

—a month-long programme of Tagore lectures, seminars, poetry and dance presentations and other cultural items sponsored by the Tagore Committee of the Asia Society, starting April 6.

The Philadelphia Tagore Society announced a Commemorative Ceremony to be held on May 5 with a presentation to the library of the University of Pennsylvania of a special set of Tagore's works, purchased by the Society in India. The Library of the City of Philadelphia announced, in the meantime, a special exhibition on Tagore's works, life, and times to be held during the month of May in honour of the hundredth anniversary of the poet's birth.

An anthology of Tagore's writings, edited and translated from the Bengali by Professor Chakravarty of Boston University, was scheduled for publication under the title *A Tagore Reader* by the Macmillan Company in New York on May 6, 1961.

Thus, already weeks and months in advance of the one hundredth anniversary of Tagore's birth in the great, rambling Jorasanko House in Calcutta, Americans were preparing their tributes to a man who made a vivid and lasting impression on their country. As in the past, when Tagore was alive, America's tribute will be varied in its form, content, and motivation. For some the accent will be on the understanding of Tagore's religious, political, and social philosophies as applied to the modern scene. For others it will be on a thoughtful and professional study of the quality of his verse, of the meaning of his art, of the construction and social content of his plays and novels. And for still others the response will be to the phenomenon of the Man himself—complex, courageous, inspired, wedded to two cultures and two civilizations, enormously talented, enormously productive, intensely patriotic, at once a visionary and a realist, alternately angry and compassionate, bearing the burdens of the world on his back: Universal Man come out of the Orient.

That the Centenary is taking place on a world-wide scale is in itself a measure of the success of the great Bengali's mission of building a bridge between the East and the West. If India, to quote the late Mahatma Gandhi, owes much "to one who by his poetic genius and singular purity of life has raised India in the estimation of the world,"[80] the world owes much to the Indian culture which produced him.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES

1. The late Edward J. Thompson in his critical study, *Rabindranath Tagore—Poet and Dramatist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), listed sixty books of verse, drama, fiction, and essays by Tagore in Bengali and no fewer than forty-four books by him in English, pointing out that his list did not include a number of text books and books of music written by Tagore "in recent years" nor "his magazine contributions (which) cover fifty years and are so incredibly many that no bibliography of them would be possible, except in a separate volume devoted to listing these alone." A later impression of Tagore's productivity is provided in Maxine Block (ed.), *Current Biography 1941* (New York: H. H. Wilson Co., 1941), p. 849, which states that Tagore wrote "about 50 dramas, nearly 100 books of verse containing more than 3,000 poems, about 40 works of fiction, innumerable songs, about 15 books of literary, political and religious essays and scores of other books ... ". Krishnalal Shridharani in his *My India, My America* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941) credits the poet with having written from 1,300 to 1,400 songs alone as well as more than 105,000 lines of verse as compared with Milton's 18,000 lines.

2. Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji, *Tagore—A Study* (Bombay: Padma Publications, Ltd., 1944), p. 66.

3. B. K. Roy, Rabindranath Tagore—*The Man and His Poetry* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1915), pp. 189-90.

4. *On the Edges of Time* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1958), p. 124.

5. This was the publication which, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, was the first in the Western world to publish Tagore's poems in English. Miss Monroe, a native of Chicago, a poet herself, and an indomitable friend and supporter of poetry and poets, founded this magazine of verse in the autumn of 1912, just about the time Tagore arrived in America, and remained its chief editor until her death on a mountain climbing excursion in Peru in 1936 at the age of seventy-six.

6. Ramananda Chatterjee (ed.), *The Golden Book of Tagore* (Calcutta: The Golden Book Committee, 1931) contained contributions from some 237 statesmen and men and women of letters from all over the world and was published in a limited edition of 1,500 copies. Its frontispiece was a portrait of the poet made from a photograph by Martin Vos of New York. American contributors in addition to Harriet Monroe, included Jane Addams of Hull House, Will Durant, Professor William E. Hocking of Harvard, John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church in New York, Helen Keller, and Upton Sinclair, to name only a few. The Library of Congress in Washington possesses a single copy of *The Golden Book of Tagore*, a donation from another contributor, Miss Alma Lissberger of New York, which it keeps in its Rare Book Collection.

7. The 4th quarter *Index of The New York Times* for 1913 included in its advertising section a special announcement in underlined boldface type in which *The North American Review* offered back numbers of the magazine containing this and other articles "for which there has been an unusual demand."

8. "India's Greatest Living Poet," *The American Review of Reviews*, Vol. 48 (August, 1913), pp. 242-4.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Three collections of verse—*Gitanjali* (Song Offerings), *The Gardener*, and *The Crescent Moon: Child Poems*, in addition to the Harvard Lectures, published as *Sadhana —the Realisation of Life* appeared in the United States in 1913; the prose drama *The King of the Dark Chamber* and two other plays, *The Post Office* and *Chitra*, in 1914; *Songs of Kabir*, Tagore's translation of one hundred songs from the fifteenth-century Indian mystic, Kabir, in 1915; and still another collection of verse (*Fruit-Gathering*) and a volume of fiction (*Hungry Stones and Other Stories*) in 1916. All were published by the Macmillan Company of New York, several going into repeated editions.

12. Dr. Mabie (1846-1916), associate editor of *The Outlook*, was the author of a number of books, including a volume entitled *American Ideals, Character and Life* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1913).

13. *The New York Times*, November 23, 1913, Section 4, p. 4.

14. "Topics of the Week," *The New York Times Book Review* (Sec. 6), November 30, 1913, p. 684, cols. 1 and 2.

15. R. I. Paul, *Tagore and His Life Campaign* (Lahore: Tagore Memorial Publications, 1942), pp. 48-49.

16. *The New York Times*, announcing the League's lecture series on October 8, 1916 (Section 7, p. 3, col. 3), headlined its report: "League gets Indian Poet" and called the forthcoming lecture "a notable event."

17. *Ibid.*, December 13, 1916, p. 13, col. 1.

18. Joyce Kilmer, "A talk with Sir Rabindranath Tagore," *The New York Times*, October 29, 1916, Section 5, p. 13, col. 1.

19. Author, teacher, lecturer, born in Madras, November 3, 1890, migrated to the United States 1909, naturalized 1941, died October 18, 1956.

20. Theodore Maynard, "I Beard the Bard—An Appraisal and Reminiscence of Rabindranath Tagore," *The Commonweal*, Vol. 34, No. 39 (September 5, 1941), pp. 462-5.

21. Thompson, op. cit., p. 259.

22. "How Tagore found Us," *The Literary Digest*, Vol. 54 (February 10, 1917), pp. 340-341.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Cited in "How Tagore found Us," *loc. cit.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. *The New York Times*, November 19, 1916, Section 1, p. 1. col. 5.

28. Taraknath Das, *Rabindranath Tagore, His Religious, Social and Political Ideals* (Calcutta: Saraswaty Library, 1933), pp. 49-50, based on a lecture given by the author at the India Institute of Die Deutsche Akademie Munich, November 25, 1932. The quotation was taken from a letter written by Tagore to The American Tagore Association in New York and dated at Santiniketan on April 10, 1931. A report on the letter, received in connection with the formal founding of the Association on the occasion of Tagore's seventieth birthday, was published in *The New York Times* of May 7, 1931, p. 26, col. 5. In the newspaper's version, the concluding words of the first sentence of this quotation are "which will offer *true* freedom *to* the human spirit" (italics added), thus differing slightly, although not significantly, from the version published in Dr. Das' book.

It is of interest to note in connection with this reference that Dr. Das' study on Tagore is dedicated to Dr. J. T. (Jabez Thomas) Sunderland for his "devoted service to the people of India." Dr. Sunderland (1842-1936), an American Unitarian minister and friend of Tagore, devoted many years to lecturing and writing on Indian conditions and aspirations, beginning with his first residence in India in connection with an educational and sociological survey in 1895-96. President of the All India Theistic Conference (1913-14) and of the India Home Rule League of America (1919-20), Dr. Sunderland edited for a time the monthly magazine *Young India* in New York and wrote a number of books on India, including *Liberal Religion in India*, 1896; *The Causes of Famine in India*, 1906 ; *India, America and World Brotherhood*, 1924; *India in Bondage*, 1928; *The Truth About India*, 1930; and *Eminent Americans Whom India Should Know*, 1933. He died at Ann Arbor, Michigan, in August, 1936.

29. P. G. Krishnayya, in an obituary on Tagore published in the New York periodical *India and U.S.A.*, Vol. I, No. 25 (August 23, 1941), pp. 1-2, reported that the poet on his 1916 visit "travelled so far and so rapidly in the hands of a money-wise lecture agent that he often said afterward that his health never recovered from the strain." While this is surely exaggerated, as evidenced by Tagore's extraordinary productivity and his extensive travels in India and the rest of the world during the next two decades and up to his seventy-fifth year, there is no doubt that the heavy lecture schedule and the festivities and

social demands which accompanied it exacted their toll at the time.

30. Rabindranath Tagore, *Letters to a Friend* (edited with two introductory essays by C. F. Andrews, London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1928), p. 69.

31. Kshitish Chandra Neogy, "Rabindra Nath Tagore—The poet Laureate of India," *The Open Court*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (March, 1917), p. 185.

32. Thompson, op. cit., p. 277.

33. *The New York Times*, November 1, 1920, p. 15, col. 1.

34. *Ibid.*, December 11, 1920, p. 11, col. 2.

35. Rabindranath Tagore, *Letters to a Friend*, p. 104.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5. Letter of December 13, 1920.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 120. Letter of February 5, 1921.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-5.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

44. "Our Santiniketan," a refrain from one of the school songs.

45. Tagore, *Letters to a Friend*, p. 149.

46. Included are the poet's sister, Swarna Koomari Devi, his daughter-in-law, Pratima, and his nephew Abanindranath, called "India's greatest living painter."

47. "When Ibanez Jumped on His Hat and other Literary Troubles," *The Literary Digest*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (October 6, 1923), pp. 50-51.

48. Alexander Aronson, *Rabindranath Through Western Eyes* (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1943), p. 85.

49. "A War on Noise," editorial in *The New York Times*, April 4, 1929, p. 26, col. 4.

50. Rabindranath Tagore, "East and West," *The Living Age*, Vol. 311 (November 26, 1921), p. 525, reprinted from *The Modern Review* (Calcutta), September, 1921.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 525, 528.

53. Rabindranath Tagore, *Creative Unity* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 129.

54. News item in *The Japan Advertizer*, Tokyo American daily, August 22, 1926.

55. Rabindranath Tagore, "East to West," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 139 (June, 1927), p. 729.

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*, p. 731

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 730-732

59. According to the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, Washington, D. C., the Service maintained an inspection station on the Vancouver side in 1929 for the inspection of aliens wanting to enter at Seattle.

60. *The Trans-Pacific* (Tokyo), May 16, 1929, p. 12, cols. 1-2.

61. *The New York Times*, October 27, 1930, p. 21, col. 6.

62. *Ibid.*, November 6, 1930, p. 32, col. 2.

63. "Look at the emotive charge of each of his works," one critic was to write later; "his flowers are portraits, his human figures are dark with intent, his blood-red colours are laid layer over layer in almost sadistic vexation; and the whole seems to hover with puckered brows over a precipice"—Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji, *Tagore—A Study* (Bombay: Padma Publications Ltd., 1943), pp. 151-152.

64. "Although he used all kinds of paints and produced coloured chalk drawings, pastels, and later dry-points and etchings, Tagore's preferred medium was liquid colour. He used any ink at hand, usually ordinary fountain-pen ink. When this was not available, he crushed flower petals and used them as pigments. To obtain a glossy effect he chose different kinds of oils, particularly coconut oil and mustard oil. He rarely used a brush (when he did it was a home-made version) and disdained the artist's palette. Instead, he

worked with cloth soaked in colour, and back of a fountain-pen, his thumb, a stick, or, more often, a knife." —Sandy Koffler, "Rabindranath Tagore," *The UNESCO Courier* (Special Report—Famous Authors as Artists), Vol. 10, No. 8 (August, 1957), p. 18.

65. Rabindranath Tagore, "A Tiny Bubble in the Silence of the Infinite," Posthumous reprint of article or commentary of unattributed source appearing in *The UNESCO Courier*, Vol. 10, No. 8 (August, 1957), p. 20.

66. "When I start to write a poem I have a vision before my eyes, a mental representation. My verses attempt to communicate images seen or created. But when I draw I do not know what I am going to make. I have no preconceived scheme in my mind. I take my pen and I begin to draw and suddenly I see a head or a flower or a cloud.... Often I have wondered at some of the things I have written and could not understand whence I had obtained the ideas, and I cannot tell you what some of the meanings in my pictures are."—S. J. Woolf, "India's Poet Who Waits for the Dawn," interview published in *The New York Times*, October 19, 1930, Sec. V. p. 9.

67. There was a momentary flurry over this subject when Tagore was either misquoted or was prevailed upon in the interim to alter the tone of statements attributed to him in a shipboard interview with *The New York Times* on the day of his arrival. According to that newspaper's account published on October 10, 1930 (p. 12, col. 4), "Sir Rabindranath told of conditions among his people and scorned the theory of home rule or independence in the present state of illiteracy. No country, he said, is capable of governing herself that has so long been in a state of subjugation." On October 13 (p. 20, col. 7), the paper published a letter from Tagore to its editor, dated October 10, taking exception to its account of his views as follows:

"I cannot allow to remain uncontradicted some misstatements of my view about the present Indian problem in the report of the interview with me which has appeared in your paper of this morning's issue. Let it definitely be known that according to me it is the opportunity for self-government itself which gives training for self-government, and not foreign subjection, and that an appearance of peace superficially maintained from outside can never lead to real peace, which can only be attained through an inevitable period of suffering and struggle.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE"

68. Reprinted in *The Manchester Guardian* of October 14, 1930, p. 17, cols. 1 and 2.

69. *The New York Times*. November 27, 1930, p. 30., col. 4.

70. *Ibid*., November 26, 1930, p. 2, col. 6.

71. This and the preceding quotation are taken from an excerpt of Tagore's address reprinted in *The New York Times* of Sunday, November 30, 1930 (Sec. 10, p. 2, col. 1) in a section devoted to the outstanding speeches of the week.

72. *Ibid*., October 9, 1930, p. 22, col. 6, repeat of interview.

73. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass (1850-1881)*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), p. 448.

74. *The New York Times*, December 15, 1930, p. 5. col. 2.

75. The expression is taken from Tagore's great farewell speech, "Crisis in Civilization," written by him in connection with his eightieth birthday celebration, three months before his death. The text was published under this title in 1950 by the International Book House, Ltd., Bombay.

76. *The New York Times*, June 16, 1940, p. 32, col. 4.

77. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 8, 1941, p. 10, col. 1.

78. *The Washington Post*, August 9, 1941, p. 6, cols. 1 and 2.

79. Rabindranath Tagore quoted in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 10, 1941, "This World" Section, p. 9, col. 4.

80. From Mohandas K. Gandhi's tribute on the poet's seventieth birthday in Ramananda Chatterjee (ed.), *The Golden Book of Tagore* (Calcutta: The Golden Book Committee, 1931), p. 1.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Lister Dees, the author of *Tagore and America*, is a former teacher, war correspondent, radio commentator, and writer with a background of study and professional writing in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. His interest in India dates from boyhood when he was impressed by the impassioned pleas of Indian students who visited his native state of North Carolina in the cause of a Free India. The idea for this little book was born when, reviewing the existing biographies of India's Nobel Prize poet, he discovered that few offered more than a passing reference to Tagore's visits to the United States and none covered all of the visits; also, that the mood and meaning of these visits had not been given the interpretation they deserved. What better commemmoration of the Tagore Centenary—the author asked himself—than to review those visits in a single volume which would faithfully reflect the mood of the times and, at the same time, convey something of the impact that Tagore and his thought and expression had (and still have) on thoughtful Americans ? The result was many months of research—most of it in the extensive and voluminous Tagore materials in the Library of Congress in Washington, informal talks with people who remembered Tagore's visits in the United States, and the reading and noting of scores of contemporary magazine articles and newspaper reports from the various parts of the country where the poet appeared. No small part of the task was the reading of Tagore himself—from among the plays, novels, lecture texts, magazine articles and verse that flowed, as from a wellspring, from the poet's pen in the twenty-nine years from the time of his first visit to the United States until his death. The picture which emerged was of a World Man whose love of India was coupled with a compassion for all men which found its expression, sometimes in criticism, sometimes in unstinted praise, always in deep friendship for the people of that New Land across the oceans in whose institutions and character as a nation he saw "the last refuge of spiritual man" and the hope of humanity. The author, who is a specialist in Middle Eastern and South Asian affairs with the United States Information Agency in Washington, regards this little volume as a "a labor of love" and he adds : "There is much in the motivation and philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore to which the world today might usefully pay heed."

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